

“How were you able to make that connection? And, more importantly, how were you able to make it so quickly?” That’s where this story begins, *The Weekly Win* for July 12, 2017.

### **Certified Work Ready**

I’ve been asked this question many times over the past three months, most recently, this past weekend. My family and I were swimming at a local pool, and a stranger engaged me in conversation, “So, what do you do?” It was polite conversation and I began to speak to the scope of work of the *Adopt An Innovator* programs. He was engaged, but when I began to mention the *Rehabilitation through Innovation* program, he sat up in his chair, intently listening. This program had peaked his interest, and I could immediately tell, he knew this pain all too well. And then, he asked the question(s), “How were you able to make that connection? And, more importantly, how were you able to make it so quickly?”

Myra, the kids, and myself, were playing “Categories” in the pool, and we had invited his daughter to play with us. My children are 15, 13, and 8, and his daughter was 7. He asked the question, and then he glanced at his daughter, and asked, “Can we talk, do you mind if she plays with your kids for a minute so that we can talk? I’m really interested in learning more.” “You bet, I’d be super glad to do that.” Myra was in direct proximity of our conversation, and she immediately swam everyone in the other direction to continue the game.

“Her mother, she’s an addict. I should say, she’s an ex-addict. This is our story, it’s one hell of a story, it’s majorly screwed up. I care for her deeply, I tried for more than a decade to make it work, I forgave, I forgave, I forgave again, and I forgave again. She’d get clean for a bit, she’d get on the right path, she’d get a job, another time she went back to college, she was smart, incredibly smart. And, then it would happen, addiction would happen. Pills, crystal, alcohol, heroine, not always the same addiction, and it was impossible to prevent, because it was impossible to predict, but it would happen. And then, it happened to me, I lost trust. The love was there, the love is still there, but the trust was gone. The trust is still gone. That’s the absolute hardest part, she now has her life together, and she’s now helping other addicts through the process of recovery. We have a very close relationship, and I still care for her deeply, but the wounds of addiction run too deep. What you are doing...man...what you are doing. Wow! Just wow.”

This is a conversation that I’ve had many times over the past few months, and I’m genuinely blessed to be able to talk with others and hear their stories. It helps me to learn, it helps me to understand, and in some way, I am hopeful that it helps to ease their pain. Talking, communication, expression, they are good for the soul. We are not alone in this struggle. I am having these conversations, and will continue to have the conversations, because of the prevalence of addiction. We’ve all been impacted by it, we all know someone that is fighting (or has fought) the battle. All of us. Despite its pain and suffering, I am blessed to be able to see the possibility of hope.

Through the *Rehabilitation through Innovation* pilot program, thirty participants received a *National Career Readiness Certificate*. THIRTY! Further, twenty-two of the thirty participants received a certificate at the Silver level. That’s amazing. And, due to the program, the County of Crawford, in the State of Missouri, reached the 100% goal to be a Certified Work Ready Community. The participants in the program, it was their certifications that enabled the County to reach this goal. Many of the

program participants are employed, many of them are back with their families, and they keep fighting the good fight. I am SUPER proud of them! And, I am genuinely thankful for all of the partners that helped make the program a success. It wasn't one of us, it has been, and continues to be, all of us.

More good news! Previously, the Missouri Job Center that served the County of Crawford was open two days a week. For the other days of the week, individuals from Crawford County were serviced by the other satellite locations (primarily the main office in Rolla, MO). However, due to the increase in volume and workload, the Missouri Job Center in Crawford County will now be open five days a week. And, we slammed their office full of people yesterday (my fault completely). 😊

Through our efforts, I am beginning to see barriers be lifted and stereotypes be re-considered. By the dozens, people have been reaching out to me, individuals that have battled addiction, or that have a criminal background, and they are looking for guidance on a new, and more opportunistic future. Currently, I average a couple of meetings or conversation each week, sometimes more, and I don't see this trend ending. I'm more than okay with that. Society's migraine is workforce; we need people that want to work. These individuals, the people that I'm meeting with, they WANT to work. More importantly, they want a new future, they want a different path. We can help with that; we are already helping with that. We simply need to do more of it, and, we will.

In addition to having a curriculum for the jail programs, I have also designed a curriculum/program for individuals that are not incarcerated. In short, people with a similar background, but they are not in jail. They are out in the world, but they might be struggling, fighting the battle of who they are versus who they want to be. More programs, more opportunities for change, and more wins to follow. That's my win for the week!